

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MEETING MINUTES

UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM

1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2018

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The Chair opens the meeting

- Meeting was opened at 6:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room
- **Selectboard Members present:** Christopher Boutwell, Michael Nelson, and Richard Kuklewicz.
- **Finance Committee members present:** Michael Naughton, Jen Audley, Fred Bowman, Greg Garrison, Richard Widmer, and John Hanold. Chris Menegoni was absent.
- **Others Present:** Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, DPW Superintendent Tom Bergeron. Town Administrator Steve Ellis was absent.
- The Finance Committee Chair announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCCI, and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one else was recording the meeting.

**Minutes –**

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 17, 2018.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 10, 2018.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

**Department of Public Works**

Department 190: Utilities

The request for Fiscal Year 2019 is the same as for Fiscal Year 2018, in total and for most of the detailed accounts. This result seems consistent with the low spending through December 2017, but if you have any background on this estimate we'd be glad to hear it.

The Fiscal Year 2017 budget was only \$4,670 lower than the current year, and almost \$25,000 (more than 20%) was turned back to the town that year. Without any knowledge of significant rate increases, the Fiscal Year 2019 request should be adequate. (Mr. Ellis also requested level funding).

Department 661-449: Highway Subsidiary to Waste Treatment Plant

This may be WPCF Superintendent McDonald's to answer, in part, but in view of the level of spending to date in Fiscal Year 2018, is a return to the \$50,800 level (excluding the Capital Outlay item) likely?

As stated in prior years, the actual expenditures from this budget are not planned, but rather incurred as needed. Since there is no crystal ball to predict what will happen, my preference is to keep the \$50,800 appropriation in case it's needed. The DPW is in charge of all main line sewers in the town.

The last few years have had \$385,000 annual appropriations to inspect, clean, and reline sewer lines. Mr. Bergeron will defer his annual appropriation for the next few years due to sewer rate constraints. The worst pipes have been re-lined, but there are 6-7 miles left to be done.

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Departments 423 & 433: Snow-Ice & Solid Waste

We see that contract increases account for most increases. Does your request also include an estimate of higher or lower volume of Removals?

I'm not aware of any increases or reductions in snowfall or trash removal, so the budget simply adjusts for contractual changes and small increases in some supplies.

Department 420 & supporting departments: Public Works

A few notes about the DPW Budgets:

- The Department 420 is a summary tab that combines 192 (Public Buildings Maintenance, 422 Streets) and 652 (Parks). Wages for all DPW employees are shown on the bottom of this page, but the individual wages are budgeted in the appropriate tab. One can track the individuals budgeted in each subgroup by following the cell references in the budgeted wages.
  - The wages for the part-time Landfill Assistant appear in Department 433, Solid Waste.
  - Budgets for departments 192 and 652 each have 3 full-time employees.
  - The budget for Department 422 includes wages for 11 full-time employees.
1. In both Fiscal Year 2018 and Fiscal Year 2019 you have provided for retirements in the Personal Services of your budget, reflecting the ages and service of your department. Are you at risk for more retirements in this 18 month period?

We may have another retirement in Fiscal Year 2018 that was not planned for, but we expect to be able to absorb the costs within our budget. I'm currently expecting one retirement in Fiscal Year 2019, one in Fiscal Year 2022 and possibly one in Fiscal Year 2020.

2. In recent years the Town increased DPW staffing levels; how that has changed the department's level of service, and has the addition worked out as well as you'd hoped?

There hasn't been a measurable change in the level of service, but some things can be done more quickly because there is more staff. The additional staff allows two-man jobs to be done more effectively, and the three can work independently to finish more tasks. Overall the additional staffing is working very well.

Mr. Hanold asked how it works to have the Tree Warden also be a town employee.

Most of the Tree Warden work is done outside of normal work hours. Most tree work is done in the fall except for emergencies. The Tree Warden stipend covers time outside of normal work hours.

3. What are your thoughts about the impact of the DPW's 4-day work week on its budget and services - both plowing and regular operations?

There's been no real impact on budget or services, and it's working really well. The longer days provide more time for "on-site" work when it takes an hour or more for daily travel back and

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forth and set-up. Ms. Audley asked specifically about snow removal on Fridays. Mr. Bergeron said that having more time to work Monday-Thursday without overtime has balanced out the cost of overtime for Friday snow removal. Ms. Olsen commented that there has not been a noticeable change in the use of overtime by the DPW since they switched to the four-day schedule.

4. Various Repair & Maintenance (accounts 524#): You are requesting several thousand dollars more in Fiscal Year 2019, although the spending to date is well below the Fiscal Year 2018 budget. Do you anticipate a change in needs?

The only requested increases are \$3,000 to HVAC Repair & Maintenance (5243) and \$2,000 to Vehicle Repair & Maintenance (5245). The increased requests reflect current and historical use and account for increasing repair costs.

After this budget was submitted, Mr. Bergeron found that the mechanics will need new computer diagnostic programs, which will cost \$4,000 annually. This was not included in the Fiscal Year 2019 budget but will be included in future budgets. Ms. Audley suggested that the change be made to the Fiscal Year 2019 budget request. (Note: The Fiscal Year 2019 request was increased by \$4,000 as a result of this conversation.) Mr. Naughton asked if the entire cost needs to be included if the purchase will save money by not having the diagnostics done by a contractor.

Mr. Naughton asked about the HVAC expenditures and Mr. Kuklewicz suggested someone look into updating the town hall heating and air conditioning systems, possibly including mini-split systems.

5. Remind us of what Other Professional & Technical Services (account 5315) covers. The request is not at issue, just the content.

The largest expense in this account is line-painting streets which can run \$18,000-\$20,000 per year. Other expenses in this account are bid participation costs, Sawmill River monitoring, guardrail installation, towing large trucks that has to be done by specialists, and brush grinding.

6. Telephone 5341- why the increase:

Last year nothing was budgeted because phone expenses were moved to the shared budget. But the cost of internet access and pagers are charged here.

7. Gasoline & Diesel (accounts 5481 and 5482) continue the higher level of Fiscal Year 2018 rather than being modified by lower spending to date. Is it a seasonal effect, or is there another reason?

The request for an increase is because the price of gas has been going up so much we expect higher bid prices for Fiscal Year 2019.

8. What caused the increase in 5443 Miscellaneous Parts and Accessories?

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The request reflects historical and current year costs.

9. The Narrative has a general statement “we seem to get a lot of requests for money that were not planned for” and also “other departments asking if we can provide additional purchases.” We assume you are not paying for things that belong elsewhere, so could you give us some examples of the unexpected costs?

Items like rugs, new window shades in the Treasurer/Collector offices, additional mulch for playgrounds and parks, and fixing a basement room for use by RiverCulture, which included clearing out, cleaning, painting, and replacing ceiling panels.

Mr. Naughton noted that the DPW narrative was not very verbose, he appreciated those with more detail and encouraged Mr. Bergeron to be more expansive next year.

**Stipends**

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend Schedules I and II as recommended by the Finance Committee.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

**Governor’s Budget for State Aid**

The Governor’s budget for State Aid was just released today. The net impact would be a \$25,551 increase to the town. State Aid estimates will be revisited at the end of February when we also get final New Growth figures to use for the Fiscal Year 2019 budget. This will allow a final calculation of the Affordable Assessment for the Gill-Montague Regional School District.

**February 15, 2018 Special Town Meeting (STM) Warrant**

**ARTICLE 2.** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, borrow, or otherwise provide the sum of \$13,250 or any other amount for the purpose of increasing the Fiscal Year 2018 Building Inspector budget, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.

Mr. Naughton suggested that this be done as a reserve fund transfer. Ms. Audley noted that the Library recently had a special article for the same purpose and a smaller amount. Mr. Kuklewicz said that we normally use the reserve fund later in the year, and go to town meeting when there is time to do so. Mr. Bowman prefers to fund it from Free Cash at Town Meeting. Mr. Naughton said he was concerned that using free cash right now might leave too little for future needs. Ms. Olsen expressed confidence that the free cash would be adequate for all expected uses.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$13,250 for increasing the Fiscal Year 2018 Building Inspector budget, to be funded from Free Cash.

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Vote:   6   In Favor   0   Opposed   0   Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend \$13,250 for increasing the Fiscal Year 2018 Building Inspector budget, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote:   3   In Favor   0   Opposed   0   Abstained

**ARTICLE 3.** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, borrow, or otherwise provide the sum of \$49,000 or any other amount for the purpose of repairing or replacing all or part of the Shea Theater building roof and related appointments, including any and all incidental costs related thereto, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$49,000 for the purpose of repairing or replacing all or part of the Shea Theater building roof and related appointments, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote:   6   In Favor   0   Opposed   0   Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend \$49,000 for the purpose of repairing or replacing all or part of the Shea Theater building roof and related appointments, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote:   3   In Favor   0   Opposed   0   Abstained

**Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:56 PM**

**List of Documents and Exhibits:**

- Minutes of January 17, 2017
- Estimated Cherry Sheet with Governor's Budget

**Next Meeting Dates:**

January 31, 2018	GMRSD
February 7, 2018	Board of Health 6:00, Treasurer (6:30), Non-capital special article requests
February 14, 2018	Building Inspector, WPCF, review potential 3-15-18 STM articles
February 21, 2018	Airport, FCTS, 3-15-18 STM votes if appropriate
February 28, 2018	Final New Growth, Revenue Estimates, Affordable Assessment
March 7, 2018	Libraries, RiverCulture
March 14, 2018	Preliminary budget recommendations
March 21, 2018	CIC Recommendations
March 28, 2018	Final Budget Recommendations
April 4, 2018	Draft FC Report, Policy actions
April 11, 2018	Revise FC Report, vote on articles

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April 18, 218  
EOY Recap

final re-votes, if required, approve FC Report  
How beneficial/useful were the department narratives?